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SIPDIS

FROM THE AMBASSADOR FOR U/S HUGHES; AF/PDPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: EMBASSY GHANA'S RAMADAN OUTREACH TO MUSLIM COMMUNITY

REF: STATE 159092

1. SUMMARY: This year Post continued to expand its Muslim outreach program during the recently completed Ramadan celebrations. The Embassy hosted more events, took the program to more areas, and reached more Muslim citizens than in any year so far. I was involved personally in several of the activities, including providing meals, both for the Muslim leadership and for residents of Ghana's poorest Muslim areas, and hosting an Iftaar dinner at my residence. We sponsored soccer tournaments for Muslim youth and met with regional Ministers in the Muslim North. We also sponsored a Koranic quiz for Muslim students, working with Muslim organizations on each activity. Many officers played important roles in the outreach program, which received excellent press coverage throughout Ghana. One officer addressed 20,000 attendees at an Eid speech in Kumasi. END SUMMARY

2. Prior to Ramadan (and before I presented my credentials), the DCM on October 6 formally hosted a Daniel Pearl Music Day jazz evening at my residence, per ref A. PolChief and a USAID official who were friends of Daniel Pearl spoke about their relationship with him, emphasized the need for tolerance, and condemned the evils of terrorism to an audience of several hundred, including many Muslim leaders.

3. Embassy officers paid a courtesy call on the National Chief Imam the first day of Ramadan (the Imam said it was the first time a diplomat had visited him so early during the holy month.) I then hosted an Iftaar at the Residence for 120 Muslim leaders, our largest ever in Accra, and included some third country diplomats for the first time. In addition, the Mission joined forces with a Ghanaian Muslim organization formed after September 11, Friends Against Global Terrorism (FAGLAT), to organize a series of Ramadan events:

-- Iftaar food donations in two poor Muslim neighborhoods of Accra: Nima and Ashiaman (where I addressed over one hundred Muslim leaders), and passed out the first parcels of food.

-- Iftaar food donations in Kumasi (Ashanti Region) and Tamale (Northern Region), for both the moderate Tijania and more conservative Alhasuna communities. While in these regions, we made calls on a wide range of Muslim leadership and met with the Regional Ministers. ECON, PAS, and POL officers organized and led these events.

-- Iftaar donations to include for the first time Wa (capital of Upper West Region), Bolgatanga (capital of Upper East), and Larabanga (in Northern Region, home to a 600-year old mosque, the oldest in Ghana). The Regional Ministers of each region accompanied Embassy staff throughout the visits. Embassy officers also paid calls on the traditional leaders of each area.

-- The Embassy sponsored soccer tournaments for Muslim youth in Accra, Kumasi, and (for the first time) in Tamale. The Accra tournament, attended by the DCM and ECON, was extremely hard-fought and has already become a tradition in the Muslim community. Sixteen teams participated. Pol Chief also attended a soccer tournament for Eid in Ashiaman, organized by the Muslim Dialogue and Humanitarian Organization.

-- The Embassy sponsored a Koranic quiz, in which twenty Muslim youth participated. It was carried live on a popular television show, with US Embassy sponsorship prominently noted.

-- One Embassy Officer addressed a group of 20,000-30,000 Muslims at the Central Mosque in Kumasi, as part of the Eid al Fitr festival. All the Kumasi-area Muslim leadership was in attendance as was the Regional Minister.

-- We have also planned for a digital video conference with Muslim youth here and in the United States.

4. Comment: This year's Ramadan outreach involved numerous members of the Mission. The Iftaar food donations, which were extensively covered in the local media and selected Muslim publications, provided meals for an estimated 15-20,000 Muslims. At each donation, Emboffs gave speeches emphasizing that Americans respect Islam and that the USG

spends around \$12 million each year in programs benefiting Muslim communities in Ghana. Our outreach effort was extremely well received and generated good will across Ghana's 20% Muslim population. Our Muslim outreach program is year-round, and integrated through all Mission elements, but our most intensive period of activity is during Ramadan.

BRIDGEWATER